

What is claimed is:

1. An automatic, self-contained device for detecting toxic agents in a water supply comprising:
  - a. an analyzer for detecting at least one toxic agent in a water sample;
  - b. introducing means for introducing a water sample into said analyzer and discharging said water sample from said analyzer; and
  - c. holding means for holding a water sample for a pre-selected period of time before the water sample is introduced into said analyzer.
2. A device in accordance with claim 1 wherein said holding means delays the analysis of a water sample for a sufficient time to allow settling of sediment contained within the water sample, and wherein said holding means further comprises means for preventing settled sediment from entering said analyzer.
3. A device in accordance with claim 1 wherein said analyzer further comprises a fluorometer for measuring photosynthetic activity of naturally occurring, indigenous photosynthetic organisms drawn into said analyzer.
4. A device in accordance with claim 3 wherein said holding means delays the analysis of a water sample for a sufficient time to allow dark adaptation of photosynthetic organisms contained within the water sample.
5. A device in accordance with claim 1 further comprising an electronics package that analyzes raw data from said analyzer and emits a signal indicating the presence of at least one toxic agent in said water.
6. A device with claim 1 further comprising a buoy that houses said device.
7. A device with claim 1 wherein said device is integrated into a common data highway comprising comprehensive sets of homeland security sensors to provide rapid incident management at susceptible real-time water monitoring locations.

8. A water quality monitor for detecting the presence of at least one toxic agent comprising:  
a fluorescence cell for analyzing photosynthetic activity of naturally occurring, indigenous photosynthetic organisms in water; means for introducing water into said cell and discharging water from said cell; a fluorometer for measuring photosynthetic activity of naturally occurring, indigenous photosynthetic organisms drawn into said cell; an electronics package that analyzes raw data from said fluorometer and emits a signal indicating the presence of at least one toxic agent in the water sample; and means for automatically delaying the analysis of a water sample for a sufficient time to allow dark adaptation of the organisms.
9. A water quality monitor in accordance with claim 8 further comprising a buoy that houses said water quality monitor.